

The Scarlet Letter: A Study in Sin and its Atonement

by Ida L. Booth

1914

Submitted to the Department of English and the
Faculty of the Graduate School in partial fulfillment
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C. G. Dunlap. Department of English.

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O U T L I N E.

Universality of belief in atonement.

Puritan influence on Hawthorne.

Simplicity of the story.

The function of the symbol of the Scarlet Letter.

The efficacy of the punishment of sin to bring about atonement.

1. By society - a failure in the case of Hester.
2. By individual - a failure as worked out by Chillingworth against Dimmesdale.
3. By guilty person.
 - a. No atonement for Chillingworth as he deliberately chose evil as his good.
 - b. Dimmesdale atones through repentance, penance, and finally public confession.
 - c. Pearl gains her freedom through hatred of falsehood and a demand for truth.
 - d. Hester atones by contrition, confession, and satisfaction.

Conclusion.

Sin is inexorable. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." Sin and its consequences has been a favorite subject with the masters of the world. To the Hebrews, it was of supreme importance. The Greeks built their drama upon it. Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, Milton each worked at the problem.

Many have seen in The Scarlet Letter only Puritanism but back of it is universality. Puritanism has furnished the background but all of Hawthorne's great stories are universal. His Puritan inheritance and environment may have deepened his meditations upon the problem which agitated the Puritan conscience, but had he been of any other time or nationality, The Scarlet Letter would have been both possible and probable. However, the primitiveness of the settlement and the austerity of the settlers furnish the background needed and Hawthorne strikes the keynote of the moral and religious atmosphere of the time in an early paragraph:

"Amongst any other population, or at a later period in the history of New England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business in hand. It could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment. But, in that early severity of the Puritan character, an inference of this kind could not so indubitably be drawn.

It might be, that a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child,was to be corrected at the whipping-post. It might be, that an Antinomian, a Quaker, or other heterodox religionist was to be scouraged out of town, It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate, was to die upon the gallows. In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanor on the part of the spectators; as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful."

In this environment, he makes a psychological study of the effects of sin upon four individuals and its reaction upon environment. Sin is traced, as says Munger, with "sleuthhound thoroughness up and down and into every corner of the heart and life and even into nature, where it transforms all things."

The Scarlet Letter is a simple story of a simple age, told with Greeklike severity. There are only four important characters: an erring wife, a wronged husband, an honored but dishonorable minister, and a little child. It is not only a master-piece but unique in its originality and substance. It is not a story of adultery. It is a story neither of the sin nor of the situation of illicit love.

It neither excuses nor condemns nor depicts such a love, An ordinary novelist would probably have begun the story with Hester's girlhood and depicted minutely the tendencies and circumstances leading up to and culminating in the crime. Hawthorne passes over this period with but a glimpse here and there of Hester in her old English home, her anxious mother, her reverend father, her meeting with the elderly scholar, the unsuitableness of their marriage, their brief sojourn in Amsterdam, their decision to move to Boston, the husband delays to adjust business matters but sends his beautiful young wife with her "rich voluptuous Oriental characteristics" to assume her station in a pioneer settlement. Left for two years to her own devices in an unrestrained pioneer settlement with no strong faith nor love to guide her, Hawthorne opens the story with the husband arriving in Boston just in time to see his wife emerge from the prison to take her place on the scaffold with her babe in her arms and with the badge of ignominy on her breast. Hawthorne neither condemns nor excuses her but simply explains that she "doubtless was strongly tempted to her fall." It is with the subjective consequences of a sinner's act that our interest begins and from thence we can study it backward and forward. So long as men and women are weak, the introduction to The Scarlet Letter will not need to be written. The temptation may be understood or guessed at but the remorse is not known, so The Scarlet Letter serves as a self-revelation to us. It is a simple story. There is little

action, the characters are not technically developed. They are gradually made transparent as they stand and we really see, not the individuals, but traits and characteristics of our general human nature under the stress of the consequences of sin.

The Scarlet Letter is not even essential to the plot, but it lifts the theme from the material to the spiritual level. It is the concentrated symbol of the whole romance. It serves as the formula for the conveyance of ideas too subtle for words. It increases the lurid picturesqueness of the moral scenery. It burns upon the wearer's breast, isolating her from mankind yet at the same time serving as the mystic key that admits her to a knowledge of the hidden guilt of others. It is Pearl's plaything, it is the Black Man's mark. Its image is reproduced on the minister's breast. Its spectre flashes in the midnight sky. Everything is tinged by its glare.

Under the ever pervading symbolism, is the strong undercurrent of the story revealing how guilt is punished in this world, whether by society, by interested individuals who take the law into their own hands, or by the guilty persons themselves. Society affixed the scarlet letter on Hester's bosom. This was the heaviest punishment man could inflict. It aimed, like all legal punishment, to protect society rather than to reform the criminal. Hester was to stand as a warning to others; if she thereby saved herself, so much the better, but to that society was indifferent. It issued no call to repentance. It crushed in self-abasement all who did not defy it. Hester defied it, so society failed to elicit any atonement. But in defying it, she is

influenced by a prudential circumstance with which society has nothing to do. "Man has marked this woman's sin by a scarlet letter which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her save it were sinful like herself. God as a direct consequence of the sin which man had thus punished, had given her a lovely child whose place was on that same dishonored bosom, to connect her parent forever with the race and descent of mortals - and to be finally a blessed soul in heaven." This sacred obligation of motherhood keeps her from plunging headlong into that abyss of sin toward which society's punishment would naturally impel her. When old Mistress Hibbins invites her to meet the Black Man in the forest, she replies: "Make my excuse to him so please you. I must tarry at home and keep watch over my little Pearl. Had they taken her from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest and signed my name in the Black Man's book, too, and that with mine own blood." She is saved from further degradation but she is not yet penitent. Surrounded by hostility, she turned from passion and feeling to thought. The social law was no longer the law for her. She entered upon a freedom of speculation, that, had they known it, would have antagonized her neighbors more than ever from her. Her heart having "lost its regular and healthy throb wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice, now starting back from a deep chasm. There was wild

and ghastly scenery all around her and a home and comfort nowhere. At times a fearful doubt seemed to possess her soul, whether it were not better to send Pearl at once to heaven, and go herself to such futurity as Eternal Justice should provide. The Scarlet Letter had not done its office."

When civil authority seems inadequate or neglectful, individuals often take the law into their own hands and this functions Roger Chillingworth. The uncommunicative student, who had buried his life in books and starved his emotions to feed his brain, had drawn the fair maiden Hester into his heart to warm that innermost chamber left lonely and chill and without a household fire. . Out of this false and illicit desire, springs all the tragedy of our story. Dimmesdale suffers for his love but the selfish Chillingworth is changed into passionate hatred which endows him with a malignant sympathy toward the object of his hate, enabling him to play at will on the victim's heart, but this same hatred severs him more absolutely from his kind. The wronged husband does not work against his wife. The man of thought knew she would bear her doom about with her,—"Dost thou know me so little, Hester Prynne?" he says to her in their first interview. "Are my purposes wont to be so shallow? Even if I imagine a scheme of vengeance, what could I do better for my object than to let thee live,—than to give thee medicines against all harm and peril of life,— so that this burning shame may still blaze upon thy bosom? Live, therefore, and bear about thy doom

with thee, in the eyes of men and women,-in the eyes of him whom thou didst call thy husband,- in the eyes of yonder child!" So he leaves Hester to the scarlet letter but he seeks revenge on the accomplice of her sin. This accomplice is unknown, and therefore, innocent in the eyes of the state, as a crime against society consists in being found out; but he is known to himself and will be known to Roger Chillingworth, who symbolizes morbid and remorseless conscience. When he asks Hester to reveal the name of the man who has wronged them both, she firmly replied, "That thou shalt never know!" but he rejoined, "Never, sayest thou? never know him! Believe me, Hester, there are few things hidden from the man who devotes himself earnestly and unreservedly to the solution of a mystery. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble, I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!" The object of the individual in inflicting punishment differs from that of the state. Chillingworth has been robbed of his wife. His plan of punishment does not look toward the good of the robber, his wife, himself, or society. It is revenge, pure and simple. He says to Hester, "Yet fear not for him! Think not that I shall interfere with Heaven's own method of retribution or to mine own loss betray him to the grip of human law. Neither do thou imagine that I shall contrive aught against his life; no, nor against his fame, if, as I judge, he be a man of fair repute.

Let him hide himself in outward honor, if he may! Not the less he shall be mine!" Chillingworth's motive is wholly selfish; he knows society will commend any punishment, no matter how severe he may inflict upon the man. He does not seem to love his wife enough to want to shield her. He does not wish to purify society by bringing the criminal to justice. Indeed this last would baffle Chillingworth's very purpose. The real agony of sin, as he well knew, lies not in its commission, which is enjoyable; not in its punishment, which is a partial relief, but in the guilty conscience and fear of discovery. Such being the case, his success depends on keeping his victim's secret. He rejects all brutal or open punishment and by so doing, he enters a much more sensitive region of torture. Hester need not fear that he will poison her babe, for Chillingworth knows that if it live, it will cause its mother the utmost agony she is capable of. He will not injure Hester,—"I have left thee to the scarlet letter" he says. When Hester, in anguish, promising to keep his secret, cries, "hast thou enticed me into a bond that will prove the ruin of my soul?" and he answered with a diabolic smile,—"no, not thine", she knew Dimmesdale was to be the victim of this most atrocious of punishments. Years afterward, when time had vindicated the accuracy and horror of his

punishment, he exclaims in horrible triumph, "Better had he died at once! Never did mortal suffer what the man has suffered He knew by some spiritual sense, -- for the Creator never made another being so sensitive as this,--he knew that no friendly hand was pulling at his heart-strings, and that an eye was looking curiously into him, which sought only evil and found it. But he knew not that the eye and hand were mine. With the superstition common to his brotherhood, he fancied himself given over to a fiend to be tortured with frightful dreams and desperate thoughts, the sting of remorse and the despair of pardon; as a foretaste of what awaits him beyond the grave. But it was the constant shadow of my presence--the closest propinquity of the man whom he had most vilely wronged! and who had grown to exist only by this perpetual poison of the direst revenge." But this diabolical system of refined cruelty can be productive of nothing but evil to both. In horror Chillingworth admits that he himself "a mortal man, with once a human heart" has become a fiend for Dimmesdale's especial torment. This drives Dimmesdale on to further penance but not to penitence. Revenge has failed. It is no restraint on crime. Instead of counteracting criminal tendencies, it increases them. An individual is justified only in inflicting upon another that which will check sinful tendencies. The state and the individual alike have failed. The culprits are as remote from true repentance as ever. Society and individual have each shown their incapacity to deal with the great problem of human frailty. Neither suppression

nor torture has availed.

Let us now see how the guilty persons work out their own punishment and redemption or ruin. The sin of sin is not so much sin itself as the concealment of that sin, for to pretend sinlessness is to assume superhuman goodness or holiness. To acknowledge the sin only to God may be far short of absolution, because a good reputation may be what the culprit most desires, as was the case of Dimmesdale. To acknowledge the truth before men is indeed to acknowledge it before God, for the human conscience is God's presence in man. Sin is selfishness, but the supreme abdication of self is complete voluntary confession which leaves no basis for sin to build on. Chillingworth recognized this, when Dimmesdale, standing with Hester and Pearl on the scaffold where he should have stood seven years before, confesses and he acknowledged that he was defeated in his complete revenge, "Hadst thou sought the whole earth over," said he, "there was no place so secret,—no high place, nor lonely place, where thou couldst have escaped me,—save on this very scaffold!" He knew that when once Dimmesdale nerved himself to make such a public acknowledgment of his guilt, that he would never more attempt concealment. All sins are pardonable, except that of the man who deliberately chooses evil as his good. Hester and Dimmesdale stopped far short of this, but Chillingworth deliberately began with such an intention. His sin was not based upon love, however passionate, as was that of Hester and Dimmesdale, but upon hate. By his very attitude he withdrew himself from all

penitent, and had penance taken the place of public confession, he would have cleared himself many times over but the nature of his crime was such that the omitted step was all important.

Artistically Hawthorne makes Arthur Dimmesdale the corollary of Hester: young, good-looking, and of good social position. By making Hester's lover a minister, he shows that no sacred vows can relieve man from the common human liability to sin. The minister stood at the head of the social world in New England. Physically Dimmesdale is delicate, morbidly conscientious, very sensitive, and very intellectual but "in no state of society would he have been what is called a man of liberal views; it would always be essential to his peace to feel the presence of a faith about him, supporting while it confined him within its iron framework." He was a follower of accepted forms, of creeds, of laws. He was not speculative like Hester. His priestly position formed the framework which supported him. He had gone through no crucial experiences calculated to make him question generally received laws, although in a single instance he had so transgressed one of the most sacred of them. His delicate, sensitive nature shrank from confession and yet, without confession, his tortured soul could find no rest. He loved the approval of his people so much he could not voluntarily give it up, and yet he knew it must be done. He says to Hester in the forest, "Happy are you, Hester, that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret! Thou little knowst what a relief it is, after the torment of a seven

year's cheat, to look into an eye that recognizes me for what I am! Had I one friend-- or were it my worst enemy!-- to whom when sickened with the praises of all other men, I could daily betake myself, and be known as the vilest of all sinners, methinks my soul might keep itself alive thereby. Even thus much of truth would save me! But, now, it is all falsehood!--all emptiness!-- all death!" Seven years of hypocrisy had brought the unhappy man to this pitiable condition. Day after day, his was a life of lies. Dimmesdale is the most pathetic character in this tragedy of sin. His will power was marvelous. A weaker man would have confessed at once or fled. Nor did he keep silent from fear for himself. He feared only the disgrace to his cause, the shame to his church, the loss of his power to do good. His nature and position made confession well nigh impossible, Frantic from the stings of unacknowledged guilt, he is yet taught by those same stings to understand the hearts of men and stir them by his heart-searching sermons. Again Hawthorne emphasizes the need of public confession. Hester knows and Chillingworth knows; but his sin has been against the community of which he is a member and to that community he must be reconciled. Under terrible pressure, he yields to the temptation of escaping from the scene of his torture, and returning homeward after yielding a reluctant consent to flight with Hester, we see the fearful agony of his soul. He is tempted to say most libelous things to the members of his congregation. He fears he has given himself over

to a fiend. The error of endeavoring to escape from the punishment of his sins has brought him into sympathy with evil spirits. Only by the utmost effort does he resist these and rush into his room. A few minutes of solitude brings the realization that he cannot escape by flight. Salvation could not come by the seeking of his own happiness, for his sins had not yet been expiated. His only salvation was to confess them to the community. Only by confession can he escape Chillingworth. When he stands upon the scaffold with Hester, the world sees him in his true character. His confession of truth ends his life of flasehood and he dies in triumphant peace. When Chillingworth, seeing Dimmesdale on the scaffold, admits "Thou hast escaped me" he no longer has a vocation, for Dimmesdale has done that which Chillingworth has advised him to do: "Wouldst thou have me to believe, O wise and pious friend, that a false show can be better, can be more for God's glory, or man's welfare--than God's own truth? Trust me, such men decieve themselves." Chillingworth had gone far deeper than he knew and had conceived a spiritual power that overmastered his own malignant one.

Still Dimmesdale's only hold on truth was through the law. He had broken it and called himself a sinner. He repented, confessed and put himself back under that law. He may even go a step beyond this, since he did not repudiate his love for Hester, but he left the solution in God's hands, for when Hester's clarified vision saw, that, if they could not flee across the seas, at least they had won the right to happiness together in Eternity, she asked, "Shall we not

meet again? . . . Shall we not spend our immortal life together? Surely, surely, we have ransomed one another, with all this woe! Thou lookest far into eternity, with those bright dying eyes! Then tell me what thou seest?" But Dimmesdale with the sense of broken law still strong upon him, replies: "Hush, Hester, hush! The law we broke! -- the sin here so awfully revealed! -- let these alone be thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be, that, when we forgot our God,-- when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul,-- it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion, God knows; and he is merciful!His will be done! Farewell!"

Pearl has been called the most romantic figure in all romance. Munger says: "Pearl is the one consummate flower of Hawthorne's genius--unsurpassed by himself and absolutely original." There is woven into her being the entire history of her erring parents. Instead of keeping pathetically in the background, as an unfortunate whose life was blighted before it began, this strange little elf, defying all precedence, takes the reins in her own hands. She sets the keynote. She is the Scarlet Letter incarnate. "The child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an

order peculiar to themselves The mother's impassioned state had been the medium through which were transmitted to the unborn infant the rays of its moral life; and, however white and clear originally, they had taken the deep stains of crimson and gold, the fiery luster, the black shadow, and the untempered light of the intervening substance." It was not a dream of human love that passed into her being but something stronger than love. Although the child of guilty passion, she inherited not so much the passion as a "protesting conscience that always put her at odds with herself." "The mother felt like one who has evoked a spirit, but, by some irregularity in the process of conjuration, has failed to win the master-word that should control this new and incomprehensible intelligence. Pearl repaid the scorn and taunts of the Puritan children with the bitterest hatred. She accepted her position as a born outcast. "All this enmity and passion Pearl had inherited by inalienable right, out of Hester's heart. She carried this hostile feeling into her fanciful play. She never created a friend, but seemed always to be sowing broadcast the dragon's teeth, whence sprung a harvest of armed enemies against whom she rushed to battle." She was as irresponsible and independent as if there were no distinction of right and wrong for her. She was vigorous and precocious to an almost preternatural degree, especially with reference to her mother's shameful badge. It was the first thing her baby eyes noticed. She constantly reverted to it. She gazed at it with her odd smile; she jested at it till her

mother wondered if she had brought a fiend into the world. This fear seemed confirmed by Pearl's touching the scarlet letter with her small finger and saying "I have no Heavenly Father" . Was it any wonder that the Rev. Mr. Dimmesdale had studied this odd child and said to himself, "Whether capable of good, I know not". Julian Hawthorne says, "Pearl in the mysterious prenatal world inherited the poison of her parents' guilt. Behind this imparted evil stands the personal soul. Shall it become the victim of its involuntary circumstances? Pearl has an unexceptionable moral environment, her evil is not imbibed from without but is manifested from within. Pearl's demon was summoned into existence not by her own acts but by the acts of others and unless with her own conscious consent it cannot pollute her. Meanwhile with that profound instinct of self-justification which antedates both reason and conscience in the human soul, the child is impelled on all occasions to vindicate her cause,--the cause of the scarlet letter. She will not leave it hidden or disavowed. She mocks and persecutes her mother so long as the latter would disguise for her the true significance of the badge. When Hester casts it away, she stamps and cries with passion and will not be pacified till it is replaced." She distrusts Dimmesdale, except when he approaches some acknowledgment of his true relation, as in his plea for Hester before the governor, and his midnight visit to the scaffold. She scorns his promise to appear with herself and her mother at the Judgment Day. She washes from her forehead the kiss given in the forest. She likes nothing hidden. She will have truth. The contradiction that ran through the child passes away as soon as Dimmesdale purposes to confess, although she had

shunned him as long as he and her mother had planned flight. As he, dying, begged for the kiss "A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies, and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow nor forever do battle with the world but be a woman in it."

How does Hester, the fourth and main character in this drama of sin, work out her salvation? Life had not been kind to her, save in streaks. She had a rich, voluptuous nature and love of beauty. She was impulsive and passionate. Reared in poverty and restraint, she found no outlet for her desires; then came the loveless marriage. Soon she precedes her husband to Salem and two years later he appears just in time to see his wife take her place on the scaffold of shame. Hawthorne shows his sympathy by suggesting that she was strongly tempted and the wronged husband himself, while he does not excuse her, at least gives extenuating circumstances. "Hester," said he, "I ask not wherefore, or how, thou hast fallen into the pit. The reason is not far to seek. It was my folly, and thy weakness. I,—a man of thought,—the bookworm of great libraries, a man already in decay,.what had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own! Misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fantasy! Men call me wise. If sages were ever wise

in their own behoof, I might have foreseen all this. I might have known that, as I came out of the vast and dismal forest, and entered this settlement of Christian men, the very first object to meet my eyes would be thyself, Hester Prynne, standing up, a statue of ignominy, before the people. Nay, from the moment when we came down the old church steps together, a married pair, I might have beheld the bale-fire of that scarlet letter blazing at the end of our path!" This fair young maiden must be caught in the meshes of evil and retribution. She must be branded by infamy. She must walk the streets of the Puritan province in solitary loneliness. But from the time she steps out of the prison door and on to the scaffold, bravely facing that terrible little world, till she kneels over her dying lover on the scaffold and mutely helps him confess his sin, before that same terrible little world, there is the same beautiful strength. Her errors are those of strength and independence rather than weakness. Plunged by solitude into a world of speculation, she soon discerns that the loveless marriage in England was a greater sin than this for which she is branded. She says to Dimmesdale, "What we did has a consecration of its own." She had loved her lover, she had given herself to him, she had paid the penalty and she held fast that which she had bought at such a price. This supports her under a weight of obloquy which would have crushed a less heroic spirit. From the outset she resolves to protect the partner of her shame and to bravely bear her curse by renouncing herself and by serving others, and we cannot withhold our admiration

for Hester's unswerving fidelity to her two-fold purpose. Under this arduous regime we see her gradually glorified in our presence till the blessings of the poor and needy follow her and the scarlet letter, instead of a badge of scorn becomes a "type of something to be sorrowed over and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too." From our first glimpse of her, she remains exterior and superior to her transgression. What she did has become a question between her and her Maker, who apparently does not deal with it like a Puritan; or He would not have given her the Pearl of great price, a poignant, but wholesome conscience.

But Hester had committed a sin against the social well being. Society is righteous in the condemnation of the sin and cannot fully forgive her until she makes satisfaction to it. Reconciliation must be won by the complete triumph of good over evil. Atonement is the method by which reconciliation with God, with man, with self is achieved. With this righteous condemnation of her sin, Hester must deal if reconciliation is to follow retribution. There must be an appeasement of a just hostility to an influence which has worked injury to the community. She must bring forth fruits meet for repentance but what gives that fruit its value is that her new character and good deeds counteract the contagious evil of her former life and make her a blessing and not a curse to the community. Through long years of service, she propitiates the outraged moral sense of the community by the pure womanliness of her character and her life of

service. She must suffer or sin will seem a slight thing. Her suffering must be great enough to make sin repulsive and purity attractive. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. She shuns none of the torture but she brings all the beauty she can out of the situation. She turns the ignominious letter into a wonderful gold embroidered adornment for her person. She lavishes untiring devotion upon her child, whom she likewise adorns so that she becomes a figure of rare and elfin beauty among the somber Puritans, and all this outward beauty is but a symbol of the beauty that develops within her soul through the patient endurance of her punishment, her helpfulness toward her fellow creatures all without hope of gaining a reward or lessening her punishment. Thus does Hester propitiate the righteous indignation of the community by a suffering life which robs sin of its fascination, and by a benevolent life which offsets the evil she has done by the charity she has shown. This brings comfort or even a calm sort of joy to her but though forgiven, she cannot forget. Years after her return to Europe, Hester came back to Salem, resumed of her own free-will the emblem of shame and took up her old life of charity. Service, in the spirit of Him who bore witness of the truth, won her the reward of freedom.

Sin separates man from God, from his fellow creatures, and, at last, from himself. It returns in retribution and the evil he has done to others recoils upon himself till, by atonement, he propitiates others and frees himself. It may be Puritan, but it is universal.

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